

true in the case of two countries like Great Britain and France, with long association of friendship, with interests closely interwoven, devoted to the same ideals of democratic liberty and determined to uphold them."

This memorable declaration was received with lively satisfaction at Prague, for it seemed to go as near to a promise as the tradition of British policy allowed. In view of the confusion of opinion as to the objects for which we ought to fight, it would indeed have been difficult to go further. Moreover, the backwardness of our armaments suggested caution in the assumption of fresh liabilities, particularly in the case of a country inaccessible by sea. If Chamberlain is to be blamed it is rather for the failure to make known his views in fuller measure in Prague before the breaking of the storm. The declaration pointed to action in the event of an unprovoked attack on Czechoslovakia and of France's assistance to her ally. But what if the demand was merely for the German districts on the fringe? The Prime Minister had his own answer to this question, but he kept it to himself.

That the warning of March 24 was meant to be taken seriously was shown on May 21, when the Czech Government believed a German attack to be imminent and took prompt steps to defend the frontiers. Sir Nevile Henderson was instructed to repeat the declaration, and, though the movement of troops was angrily denied at Berlin, our action emphasized our interest in Czechoslovakia's independence. On the other hand, the encouragement to Prague was partially counteracted by a mysterious episode. At a lunch party given by Lady Astor to Canadian journalists the Prime Minister privately expressed his opinion that the Sudeten districts might have to be ceded to Germany. Unauthorized

reports of his
table talk in Canadian papers doubtless
confirmed Hitler's
belief that England would not fight to prevent
the German
fringe joining the Reich. They produced no
weakening at
Prague, which offered four successive plans of
autonomy, but
refused to consider the cession of territories
which had formed
part of the state for many centuries.

The massing of German troops round
Czechoslovakia during
the summer and the feverish efforts to
strengthen the Siegfried
line indicated Hitler's resolve to reach his goal-
The September
crisis began with his announcement on
September 12 at the
annual Nuremburg rally that the Sudeten
Germans must
determine their own fate. Lord Runciman,
who had been